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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 006579

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE AND S/CT

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: "FRANCE HASN'T KNOWN A DECADE WITHOUT TERRORISM"
SAYS C/T HEAD

REF: A. PARIS 5539

[B](#). PARIS 4750

[C](#). PARIS 5203

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS
ONS 1.4 B/D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Although he acknowledged the danger of being "pessimistic by profession," Christophe Chaboud, the Ministry of Interior's new counter-terrorism head, told POL M/C and Poloff September 23 that he believed terrorism was a serious and evolving long-term threat. France had been a victim of terrorism since the 1950s, said Chaboud, and he predicted that it would be fighting terrorism for decades to come. He said the GOF had been impressed by the British response to the London bombings in July, and would present to the legislative branch in mid-October a number of new C/T proposals based on some UK counter-terrorism approaches. End summary.

TERRORISM: AN EVOLVING THREAT

[1](#)2. (C) On September 23, POL M/C and Poloff met with Christophe Chaboud, the head of UCLAT (Counter-terrorist Coordination Unit). UCLAT is the Ministry of Interior's nexus for all counter-terrorism operations, analysis and exchanges. Chaboud said he arrived in his position in late May after a 20-year career with the DST, France's internal security service. Within the DST, Chaboud said he worked in Paris for many years but also overseas, including several years in Mexico and Lebanon. In addition to its domestic tasks of coordinating operations and analyses, Chaboud said UCLAT works closely with its counterparts in the G-5 (France, the UK, Spain, Italy and Germany) to coordinate cross-border operations and facilitate information sharing. The G-5 works very well together, said Chaboud, in large part due to the shared experience of terrorism. UCLAT also has reinforced exchanges with the Benelux countries, said Chaboud.

[1](#)3. (C) Saying he has been "pessimistic since the 1990s," Chaboud told POL M/C he believes terrorism began to evolve in 1998, with the release of the bin Laden fatwa targeting Jews and "Crusaders." This fatwa legitimized terrorist operations beyond those that had been conducted in the name of political and ethnic grievances. The fatwa internationalized and gave a modern ideological base to Islamic extremism, said Chaboud. Terrorist groups that had previously focused on political and nationalist goals took on the ideology of Islamic extremism. One example of this, said Chaboud, is the GSPC, the Algerian-based terrorist group that in recent years has worked to reinvent itself as a al-Qaeda linked transnational organization (ref B). Although its current reasons for conducting terror attacks differ from its more nationalistic rhetoric of the 1990s, the GSPC's primary targets are still Algeria and France, said Chaboud. (Note: French press reported on September 26 that authorities arrested 9 people in the Paris and Normandy regions suspected of links with the GSPC and of being in the initial stage of planning a terrorist attack in France. The suspected ringleader, Saïe Bourrada, had been convicted in 1998 for his logistical support of the 1995 GSPC attacks in France. End note.)

[1](#)4. (C) POL M/C asked Chaboud for his analysis of Islamic extremism in France given France's significant Muslim population. (ref A) Chaboud said Muslims in France were susceptible to extremist ideologies and "vulnerable to radicalization." However, he did not believe any significant levels of Islamic extremism existed in France. The RG closely monitored Muslim-majority areas after the London bombings in July, said Chaboud, and did not find any broad-based support, although there were isolated "cries of joy." Chaboud said Islamic extremism was a "contagion" threat that could spread between small groups, usually because of the influence of an individual with experience in jihadist circles in Afghanistan and now, Iraq. (Note: In interviews with the French press, Chaboud has reiterated GOF concern that the conflict in Iraq serves as a recruiting tool and an attractive force for some French Muslims who turn towards extremism. Chaboud said Iraq has become a training ground for those wishing to learn terrorist tactics.

Terrorism investigating judge Jean-Francois Ricard took up this subject in a recent AP interview in which he said that French militants were returning from Iraq with the goal of conducting terrorist attacks in France. End note.)

NEW C/T PROPOSALS

15. (C) Chaboud said the Council of Ministers would likely approve a number of new C/T proposals in early October, and would submit these proposals to the legislature in mid-October. They include the expansion of surveillance cameras in public transport, a reinforcement of penalties for terrorism-related crimes, and new regulations on government access to cellular phone and other personal transaction details (ref C). Chaboud said that some of the proposals, such as mandating government access to telephone and flight information, would simply legalize what was already current practice by intelligence and security services. Current restrictions on information-gathering mean that French intelligence obtains information under the table through its long-standing relationships with companies, said Chaboud.

16. (C) Other C/T proposals were drawn from lessons learned after the London bombings, said Chaboud. He said the GOF was impressed with British use of surveillance cameras to quickly progress in the investigation. France needed this capacity, said Chaboud, because of what it believed to be the increased possibility of simultaneous attacks and series of attacks. Those involved in the London attacks planned on committing others soon afterwards, said Chaboud, and the British government was successful in stopping more attacks because they quickly identified the perpetrators. He said the GOF believed surveillance cameras also had a deterrent effect. Chaboud added that French crisis response needs to focus its planning on the prospect of simultaneous attacks. Above all, France wants to reinforce the investigative and surveillance tools used by its intelligence and police forces.

17. (C) Chaboud said he was pleased with the recent visit by French officials to the U.S. to discuss PNR and no-fly list issues. France did not have no-fly lists like the United States, preferring to target specific individuals instead of issuing lists of possible suspects, said Chaboud. Still, he said France was open to other methods that balance privacy and counter-terrorism concerns, and he hoped that the French officials would come back from the U.S. with suggestions. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
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